

Earth-Friendly Gardening & Landscaping

The GreenMan



Creating a jardin d'amour

For the poets of antiquity, through medieval and early modern troubadours, fragrant gardens and seductive bowers have been honored as the perfect setting for trysts and the exchange of lovers' vows. So why not create your own romantic retreat in which to idle away time with your soul mate?

Romance, of course, begs for an intimate setting. Your lawn may be fine for croquet, but it will never replace the atmosphere of a secluded woodland dell, with or without frolicking nymphs. Fortunately, there are numerous inexpensive ways to transform an unused corner of your yard into an amorous setting.

One of the easiest and quickest options is to build or purchase a trellis, pergola, or arbor. Many specialty garden centers and upscale home improvement stores feature attractive structures fabricated from wrought-iron, copper, zinc, cedar, and redwood, most for less than several hundred dollars. An even wider variety can be found through garden catalogs or the Internet.

With the structure in place, you can create your romantic bower by planting climbing roses or other suitable vines. Roses, of course, have a stronger association with love than any other flower, although they are not necessarily the easiest plants to manage. Most climbers will take

two to three years to achieve their full blooming potential, and they will not provide a lush display beyond spring, for the most part.

To ensure privacy and color from the outset, you should consider interplanting roses with other climbing vines, such as the dazzling cultivars of ornamental clematis, native coral honeysuckle, or even annual vines like hyacinth bean, with its rich purple seed pods, or old-fashioned and reliable sweetpeas. Mind your color scheme and select your flowering vines to complement the color of your roses.

Of course, you need not plant roses at all. Use some of the vines already cited, and also consider intriguing gems like passionflower, if the name does not seem too cloy-

ing, climbing hydrangea, or even grapes, although grapes need more care and a stronger support than other vines.

Inside your private garden, you may want to add a simple bistro table and chairs, should you plan to enjoy a romantic picnic or late night champagne rendezvous. Or you might just carry out a moisture-proof picnic blanket and several oversized pillows to recline and dine.

Water is always a lovely feature, either for day or night. If electricity is available, there are scores of multi-tiered fountains, copper urns with sprays, and soothing tabletop fountains available, often for less than 100 dollars. For daytime use, consider some of the solar fountains gaining popularity. Naturally, you



will want to keep your water clean and well-aerated to avoid unwanted mosquito guests.

Fragrance is another important consideration. If you wish to supplement your arbor plantings, you can surround your lover's garden with lemon-scented daylilies or lavender, or keep a rose theme going with some antique roses or fragrant modern roses. You can also add tender potted plants, such as the many species of jasmine, everblooming-gardenia, dwarf citrus trees, and so forth. As many of the most fragrant plants are tropical, you will need to move them indoors during colder weather.

If you are more interested in a garden for moonlit trysts, focus on plants and flowers whose white and silver blooms and foliage can reflect lunar light while wafting an air of aromatic sensuality. Among the best choices are fast-climbing moonflower, silver vine, virgin's bower (our native clematis), common yarrow,

santolina, and various artemisia species, in addition to many of the jasmines and gardenias already suggested. You might also think about hanging baskets or urns heavily planted and overflowing with annuals such as white lobelia, sweet alyssum, and cream-colored petunias.

For evening use, stock up on soft-glowing votive candles, lanterns and other luminaries. Even miniature white lights can be woven into your vines or draped lazily atop the arbor structure. Forget about using large, smoking garden torches; they are meant for luaus, not love.

Naturally, we have addressed only the quickest approach for establishing your *jardin d'amour*. A longer-term project might actually establish a true secret garden, walled-round with fragrant hedges of Persian lilac or English boxwood, or native shrubs like American Cranberrybush, nannyberry, arrowwood viburnum, or Summersweet Clethra.

While such an enterprise would be much more expensive and labor intensive, it would provide a larger, permanent retreat which could only become more appealing over time, and would allow for the addition of classical elements like a lily pond, statuary, pathways for intimate strolling, and exotic topiary, as well as the garden structures we have already contemplated, or a more elaborate pavilion or tea house. It is your budget, after all, and you just might want to transform your entire backyard into a garden of love.

Of course, for true romantics, perhaps nothing more is necessary than a secluded garden nook, a candle or two, a tender rhapsody playing in the background, and the clink of wine glasses. Or, as an eleventh century Omar Kahyyam put it, "A loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thou beneath the bough, were paradise enow."

Botanical Recommendations for a Romantic Garden

Climbing Roses

America
Blaze
Blossom Time
City of York
Constance Spry
Dublin Bay
Excelsa
Golden Showers
May Queen
New Dawn
Paul's Scarlet Climber
Silver Moon
White Dawn
William Baffin

Vigorous Clematis

Jackman Clematis
Virgin's Bower
Golden Clematis

Scarlet Clematis
'Betty Corning'
Clematis recta

Fast-Growing Flowering Vines

Cup-and-sucer Vine (*Cobaea scandens*)
Hyacinth Bean
Moonflower
Sweet Pea
Black-eyed Susan Vine

Vines for Fragrance

Jasmine species (many, most are tender)
Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)
Goldflame Honeysuckle (*L. heckrottii*)

Other Fragrant Additions

Dwarf/Containerized Citrus species
Gardenia (tender)
Herbs (Lavender, Rosemary, Sage, Artemesia)

Sweet Woodruff
Nicotiana
Daylilies
Bulbs (hyacinths, daffodils, tulips)
Peonies
Lily of the Valley
Scented Geranium (numerous, tender)

Roses for Fragrance

Crimson Glory
Tiffany Robert
Chrysler Imperial
Sutter's Gold
Granada
Fragrant Cloud
Papa Meilland
Sunsprite
Double Delight
Fragrant Hour
Angel Face



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